

THE
A X E
LAID TO THE ROOT
OF THE OLD CORRUPT-TREE.

AND

The Spirit of deceit struck at in its nature, from whence all the error from the life, among both Papists and Protestants hath arisen, and by which it is nourished and fed at this Day.

In a Distinction between the Faith which is of man, and the Faith which is of GOD.

And in some *Assertions* concerning true Faith, its nature, rise, &c. Its receiving of Christ, its abiding and growing in his living Vertue.

With a warning concerning adding and diminishing from the Scripture in generall, (and the Prophecies of the *Revelation* in particular.) Discovering what it is, and the great danger of it, with the only way of preservation from it, where is added a Short touch about the Use of Means.

As also a brief History concerning the state of the Church since the dayes of the Apostles.

With an Exhortation to the present Age.

By the movings of the Life, in a friend to the Living truth of the most High God, but an utter enemy to the spirit of error and blasphemy, where ever it is found, as well in the strictest of the Protestants, as among the grossest of the Papists.

Isaac Penington the younger.

L O N D O N :

Printed and are to be sold by Lodowick Lloyd, at his shop next the Castle in Cornhill, 1659.

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There was a glorious day, and bright appearance of truth in the times of the Apostles. They had the true Comforter, who led them into all truth, and kept them alive in truth, and truth alive in them. By this Spirit they, as living stones, were built up a spirituall house, founded upon *Sion* the holy mount, into *Jerusalem* the holy City, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth. And here they had their conversation in heaven, with God the Judge of all, with Christ the Mediatour, and with the Spirits of iust men and the holy Angels, which alwayes behold the face of God. They lived in the Spirit, they walked in the Spirit, they prayed in the Spirit, they sung in the Spirit, they worshipped in the Spirit, and in that understanding which the truth had made free, and had God dwelling with them, and Christ walking in the midst of them; and by the presence and power of his life in them; were truly dead unto sin, and alive unto God, they being not strivers against sin with mans legall spirit, but by the power of grace, which made them more then conquerours through him that loved them. This was part of the glory of that state, in that day of the Sunshine of the Gospel.

But behold, a thick night of darknesse overspread the beauty of this! Some false brethren went out from the true Church into the world, getting the Sheeps cloathing, making a great outward appearance, and drew the world after them, yea and some from the very Churches themselves: (how hard was the Apostle *Paul* to plead with the *Corinthians* about his own Apostleship and Doctrine that he might preserve that Church from the false Apostles!) And when they had gathered a sufficient party in the world, they made head against the true sheep & lambs of Christ, fought with them, and overcame them. And when they had overcome them that had the living testimony of Jesus, and the true power and presence of the Spirit among them, then they set up their own dead form, making a cry all over the nations of the earth, *Revelation is ceased*, there is no looking now for such an infallible spirit, and such immediate teachings as the christians had in the Apostles dayes, who had the anointing to teach them all things: but they point men to traditions, to the church, as they call it (which title the whore hath engrossed since the dayes of the Apostles) or to searchings of the Scriptures, and reading expositions upon it, and bodies of divinity, formed by the understanding part in man to instruct the understanding part. Thus the whole course of religion and of the knowledge of God, came

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to be out of that Spirit and life wherein it first came forth (and wherein it first stood) and consisted in doctrines of men, and a form of worship and knowledge which the wisdom of man had framed, in an imitation of that which formerly stood in the life.

And now men being gone from the life, from the Spirit and his immediate teachings, into an outward form of knowledge and worship of God in the wrong nature; now Antichrist is got up, and the Dragon sits in the Temple, appearing there as if he were God, giving out laws and ordinances of worship in publique, and putting men upon duties and exercises of devotion in private, and he is obeyed and bowed down to in the observation of these; but the true living God is not known, nor his secret still voyce (which calls out of these) heard, because of the great noise which the Dragon makes in his Temple (for so it is now, he having gained it, though it was once Gods) about his laws and ordinances of worship, which he would have all compelled to, and none suffered to testify against them that they are his, and not the Lords.

Yet it pleased the Lord, all the night of this darknesse, to raise up some; witnesses against the Dragon, and all his invented forms of worship, though they were still hunted, persecuted, knocked down, and their testimony cryed out against as error, heresie, schism and blasphemy, and the wayes, worships and ordinances of the whore the beast and the dragon still cryed up as the truth. Thus the Papists, they cryed out against the Protestants as heretiques and schismatiques, who were witnesses against them; and the Protestants, they cryed out against the non-conformists, seperatists and brownists, who were witnesses against them; and every sect cries out most against them, who are led further from the apostacy, and raised up by the Lord as witnesses against them, against their setting down in their forme, and not pursuing the guidance of that spirit, which would lead them quite out of the darknesse, and not have them sit down by the way.

Now the Lord God in these latter dayes, hath not only raised up witnesses against the Whore, the Dragon, the Beast, the false Prophets, with all their inventions which they have set up instead of the truth; but hath assayed, and begun to deliver his people out of this Egyptian darknesse; and to bring them back to the light of the land of *Canaan*. And now great enemies have appeared, the sons of the night exceedingly strengthening themselves to keep out the day light, every one crying up his own form, and all joyning hand in hand against the power: yea & that spirit, which first tempted from God, is exceeding busie to cause those whom the Spirit of the Lord hath been drawing out of the land

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land of darknesse, to make a Captain to return to *Egypt*, or at least to sit down in some form, or some pleasant notion of things by the way & not to follow the Lord, through all his intricate leadings in the vast howling Wildernes, til he bring them into the possession of the true rest. What a work there was to quench that spirit which stirred in the Protestants against Popery, & to fix the in Episcopacy, & in the use of the Common prayer book? When that was detected & turned from, then Presbittery endeavoured to take its place, & to bring in its directory: but the pursuit of the Lord was so hot against that, that it stunk presently, & his mighty hand would not suffer that so much as to arise. Much about the same time, Independency and Anabaptism appeared and contended; and there was a more simple and honest thing stirring there, then in the other: and accordingly the blessing of the Lord (which was not to the form, but to the life that was stirring within) did appear more among them. But they, fixing there, lost the life and simplicity to which the blessing was, and met with the death and the curse, which is the proper reward of the form: for any form out of the life, kills the life; and its reward is death to it selfe. The form kills the life, which stirred underneath, and made it appear with some freshness; and when the life, from which it had its seeming beauty and lustre dyes, then it soon withers and dyes also: so that the living principle being once slain, there remains nothing but the dead spirit feeding on the dead form. There was one more pure appearance, and nearer to the Kingdom then all these, which was of seeking and waiting: but death overcame this also, making a form of it, and stealing in some observations from the letter of the Scriptures concerning the Kingdom, whereby their eyes were withheld from beholding the inward principle and seed of life within, to look for some great appearance of power without (such as was among the Apostles) to set things to rights; and so they were held captive by the same spirit in their seeking and waiting, whereby the others are held in their forms. Thus have persons generally missed the following of that good Spirit, which began to lead them out of *Egypt*, the dark Land; and loosing their guid, have fixed somewhere or other by the way, resting in some form, or in some notion or expectation of things (according as in their wisdom they have imagined from their skill in the letter) short of the life it selfe. Thus have their carcases fallen in the Wildernes.

Now this I have to say to you all. All you who rest in any form whatsoever, or rest in any notion or apprehension of things short of the life it selfe, ye had een as good have stayed in *Egypt*, as to fix by the way, and to take up a rest in the Wildernes, short of *Canaan*. In plain terms,

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ye had as good have abided in Popery or in Episcopacy, ye had been as acceptable to God there, as here. Not that I say your forms of Independency, Anabaptism, or seeking, are as bad as Popery, Episcopacy, or Presbiterie; nay they are all somewhat neerer, and the last of them very much neerer: but your fixing there, and the dead spirit feeding there on the dead thing, is as remote from life, as if it had gone quite backe again: And this dead spirit is as hatefull to God here, as it is among the Papists, yea and in one sence more, because it makes a pretence beyond them.

And the truth is, ye have gone back againe, though not in the direct form, yet into that very spirit, wherein Poperey's strength and kingdom lies, & so are become one of the beasts names, & your strength & defence lies in the beasts horns, either in the outward powers of the earth, or in that inward knowledg of things and wisdom from the letter, which is out of the life, and so are not yet come out of the City *Babylon*. For mark, The spi it that fixeth in a form short of the life, is the same that whored from the life: and the same spirit is the whore still, in what form soever she be. The spirit that rose up in the life, against the death and corruption whereof Popery wholly consisted, was a good spirit, and this spirit would passe through all forms, till it meet with the life: it is the other spirit that sayes to thee, thou hast gone far enough, and so tempts to stay by the way. And he who hearkens to this spirit, and staies any where by the way, he is caught with the old whore in a new dresse, and is drinking the cup of fornication afresh. And then like the Papists, he runs to the powers of the earth, to defend his form, against the witnesses of God (and that's his cover under which he persecutes, and there he lyes hid for at least to his own wisdom and reason, to strengthen himself with arguments for fixing here, and against going any further. And then he grows wise in the flesh, and cryes out against them, who are stilled by the same spirit to presse on further, as weak, silly, giddy, unsetled, seduced people, that can never know when they are well. Thus the wise Episcopallians reviled the simple-hearted non-conformists, who pursued further then they: and the non-conformists, when they lost their simplicity and began to stick, reviled those that pursued beyond them: and thus at this day, those who are pressing on in the spirit, are disdained by those who have took up their station in the flesh, and with their two great horns, of earthly power and earthly wisdom, are they pushing at them.

Look about you, look about you, all sorts of devout professors, see where ye are: are you not dead in your forms? is not the good old
puritan

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puritan principle (wherein once was true life in its measure), dead and buried there? Consider with your selves, hath that grown in your forms, or hath it been slain there? Speak the truth in your own hearts, Can ye truly say, from a sensible feeling in the life, that that principle is still alive in you? If it were so, ye could never be drawn to persecute, nor not to suffer persecution, ye that have power to hinder it: but if that seed be choked, then ye may well connive at, if not further the enemy, and plead for him, and joyn interests with him. While *Abel* lived in you *Cain* could not rise up in his dominion, but now the righteous seed is slain, the murdering nature appears. O hasten out of this spirit, hasten out of *Babylon*, cast off the spirit of popery, return to the old puritan-principle: Do not cry it up in deceit, to oppose the present appearance of truth, which is grown up further in it; but subject that dead formal earthly spirit to it, which is fallen beneath it: and when ye are come to a true touch of life there, ye may be able to own the same truth in its growth to a further measure. But while thou art in the dead underground, and from the power and life of truth in thine own particular, dost thou think to be able to measure truth aright in others. Nay, thou measurest by a false appearance of things in the fallen understanding, and in the wisdom which thou hast gathered there, since thou thy self sellest from the living principle: and this must needs commend that most, which is nearest to it, and not that which is nearest to truth. And this is the great error of this age, men with a gathered knowledge from Scripture-words, without the true faith and life, go about to measure that life and knowledge which comes from the faith: and because it suites not with the apprehensions which they have taken into their minds, they condemn it. And thus being in the stumbling wisdom and way of observation, to which truth was never revealed, but was ever an offence, they stumble at it: and thus men generally dish, and split themselves against the same rock now, as the *Pharisees* did of old. Now this understanding must perish, and this wisdom in men be brought to nought; before that can be raised up which can judge aright.

~ Hearken therefore to my exhortation, as ye love your souls, Come out of popery indeed and in truth, come out of the spirit of popery; burn the whore in her new forms, as well as in her old: Cast off all these new names of the Beast, under which the old spirit has made a prey of the life in your own particulars, and lies lurking to make a prey of the life in others, and to force it into its own deceitfull forms of death, and slay it. Leave defending your faith and church by the Beasts horns, and come to that faith and church which is received, gathered, and defended

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sended by Christ the one horn of salvation. Leave your reasoning; and disputings in that wisdom which has slain the life, and come to that wisdom which comes from the life, and springs up in the life; and ye will find more certainty and satisfaction in one touch of true life, then in all the reasonings and disputes of wise men to the worlds end. The ground wherein mens religion grows (even of the most zealous) is bad, even the same ground wherein the *Pharisees* religion stood and grew; and it hath brought forth such kind of fruit, namely, such a kind of conformity to the letter, as theirs was, which stands in the understanding and will of man, rearing up a pleasant building there, but keeps from the life, and from building in it. But the true religion stands in receiving a principle of life, which by its growth forms a vessell for it selfe and all the former part, wherein sin on the one hand, or selfe righteousness on the other hand stood and grew, passeth away.

These things following strike at the King of *Babylon* himselfe, yea even at the very root of the Antichristian spirit in every man, which he that can mildly receive the stroke of, may feel the true Spirit of life (which lies slain underneath) spring up in him, and give life to his soul; which, when it is delivered, will be able truly to know and rejoyce in the Lord its Saviour. And when the root of that spirit is cut downe (which never brought forth sweet pleasant fruit unto life, but only sowre fruit, finely pickled and dressed for the eye and palate of death) its body, branches, leaves and fruit will wither and dye daily, and truth come to grow safely.

A Distin-

Distinction between the faith

which is of man, and the faith which is of GOD: One whereof is the Faith of *Sion*, the other the Faith of *Babylon*; the one laying hold on Christ, as he is revealed the King of life in *Sion*, the other layes hold on an Historicall relation of Christ, the same whereof hath founded in *Babylon*.

THere is a faith which is of a mans selfe, and a faith which is the gift of God; or a power of beleeving which is found in the nature of fallen man, and a power of beleeving which is given from above. As there are two births, the first and the second; so they have each their faith, and each beleeve with their faith, and seem to lay hold on the same thing for life; and the contention about the inheritance will not be ended, till God determine it. *Cain* will sacrifice with his faith, and he beleeves he shall be accepted: if he had not beleeved so, he would not have been so angry when he found it otherwise. And the *Cainish* spirit in man, the vagabond from the life of God, which hath not an habitation in God, nor the eternall life of God abiding in him, he is busie with the same faith at this day, and hath the same expectation from it, as *Cain* had.

This is the root of the false religion, of the false hope, of the false peace, of the false joy, of the false rest, of the false comfort, of the false assurance, as the other is the root of the true. In this faith which is of man, and in the improvement of it stands all the knowledge, zeal, devotion, and worship of the world in generall, and of the worldly part in every man in particular: but the true knowledge, the true zeale, the true devotion, the true worship

2 *The faith of the two births distinguished.*

stands in the faith which is given of God, to them which are born of the immortall seed, which lives in God, and in which God lives for ever.

Now it deeply concerns every man to consider, from which of these his knowledg, religion, and worship proceed, and in which of them they stand: for if they proceed from, and stand in the faith which is of man, they cannot please God, nor conduce to the salvation of the soule; but though they may tast very pleasantly to mans palate now, and administer much hope, and satisfaction to him at present, yet they will faile at the time of need: For as Christ said concerning the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, so may I say concerning this faith: *Except your faith, with the works of it, exceed that faith and all the works of it (even to the utmost improvement thereof) which is to be found in mans nature, it will never lead you to the kingdom of God, nor be able to give you any right to the inheritance of life.* For he that will inherit, must be the right heire, must have the faith of *Abraham*, the faith of *Isaac*, which springs up from the root of life in the seed, and this leads the seed into that spring of life (out of which it shot forth as a branch) which is the inheritance promised to the seed. And here is Christ, *Alpha and Omega*, in every particular soul, where life is begun and perfected, running its course through time, back to that which was before the beginning.

Therefore observe and consider well, what this faith which is of a mans selfe can doe, and how far it may goe in the changing of man, and in producing a conformity of him to the letter of the Scriptures. And then consider where it is shut out, what it cannot do, what change it cannot make, what it cannot conform to, that so the true distinction may be let into the mind, and not a foundation layed of so great a mistake in a matter of so great concernment.

I. A man may beleeve the history of the Scriptures, yea, and all the doctrines of them (so far as he can reach them with his understanding) with this faith which is of man. As by this faith a man can believe an history probably related to him; so by this faith may he beleeve the histories of the Scriptures, which are more then probably related. As by this faith a man can receive doctrines of instruction out of Philosophers books, so by the same faith he may receive doctrines of instruction out of the Scriptures.

Reading

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Reading a relation of the fall of man, of the recovery by Christ, that there is no other way to life, &c. This faith can beleve the relation of these things, as well as it can beleve the relation of other things.

2. This being believed from the relation of the history of these things, this naturally sets all the powers of man on work (kindling the understanding will and affections) towards the avoiding of misery, and the attaining of happinesse. What would not a man doe, to avoid perpetuall extremity of misery on soul and body for ever, and to obtain a crowne of everlasting blessednesse? This boils the affections to an height, and sets the understanding on work to the utmost, to gather all the rules of Scripture, and to practise all the duties and ordinances therein mentioned? What can the Scripture propose to be believed, that he will not believe? What can it propose to be done, that he will not do? Must he pray? he will pray. Must he hear? he will hear. Must he read? he will read. Must he meditate? he will meditate. Must he deny himselfe and all his own righteousnesse, and duties, and hope only for salvation in the merits of Christ? he will seeme to do that to, and say, when he has done all he can, he is but an unprofitable servant. Does the Scripture say he can doe nothing without the Spirit? he will acknowledge that too, and he hopes he has the Spirit; God hath promised the Spirit to them that aske it: and he has asked long, and asks still, and therefore he hopes he has it. Thus man by a naturall faith grows up, and spreads into a great tree, and is very confident, and much pleased, not perceiving the defect in his root, and what all his growth here will come to.

3. This being done with much seriousness and industry, there must needs follow a great change in man: his understanding will be more and more enlightened, his will more and more conformed to that, to which he thus gives himselfe up, and to which he thus bends himselfe with all his strength, his affections more and more warmed, he will find a kind of life, and growth in this according to its kind. Let a mans heart be in any kind of study or knowledge, applying himselfe strictly to it, he gathers understanding in his mind, and warmth in his affections: so it is also here. Yea this being more excellent in it selfe, must needs produce a more excellent understanding, and a more excellent warmth, and have a

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greater power and influence upon the will: *to make a man*
 4. Now how easie is it for a man to mistake here, and call this the truth? First, he mistakes this for the true faith, and then he mistakes in applying to this all that which belongs to the true faith: and thus entring into the spirit of error at first, he errs in the whole course of his religion, from the beginning to the end. He sees a change made by this in him, and this he accounts the true conversion and regeneration. This leads him to ask and seek and pray, and this he counts the true praying, the true seeking, the true asking. This cleanseth (after its kind) his understanding, will, and affections, and this he takes for the true sanctification. The justification which is to the true beleever, he also applies to this faith: & so he has a peace, a satisfaction, a rest here, and an hope of happinesse hereafter. Thus he receives what is already revealed, & he waits for what may be further revealed, which he can embrace and conform to, turning still upon this center, and growing up from this root. And he that does not come hither in religion, falls short of the improvement of mans nature, and of the faith that grows there, (which naturally leads all the powers of nature hither, and fixes them here) which is but dead. And now this man is safe, he is a beleever, he is a worshipper of God, he is a Christian, he is an observer of the commands of Christ: when the overflowing scourge comes, it shall not touch him: all the judgments, plagues, threatnings in the Scripture belong not to him, but to the unbelievers, to them that know not God, to them that worship not God, to them that observe not the commands of Christ: thus by his untempered mortar, from his false faith, he has built up a wall against the deluge of wrath, which wall will tumble down upon him when the wrath comes. The growth of this faith, and great spreading of it into all this knowledg, zeal, and devotion, hath not changed the nature of it all this while, but it is the same that it was at the beginning, even a power of nature in the first birth, and all these fruits are but the fruits of the first nature, which is still alive under all this. All this can never kill the principle out of which it grows, but seeds it more and fattens it for the slaughter.

Thus far this faith can go; But then there is somewhat it is shut out of at the very first. There is somewhat this faith cannot receive, beleeve, or enter into. What is that? It is the life, the power,

power, the inward part of this. Though it may seem to have unity with all the Scriptures in the letter, yet it cannot have unity with one Scripture in the life: for its nature is shut out of the nature of the things there witnessed. As for instance, it may have a litterall knowledge of Christ, according as the Scripture relates: of his birth, preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, &c. Yea, but the thing spoken of, it knoweth not. The nature of Christ (which is the Christ) is hid from that eye. So it may have a litterall knowledge of the blood of Christ, and of justification, but the life of the blood which livingly justifieth, that birth cannot feele; but can only talk of it, according to the relation it reads in the Scripture. So it may have a litterall knowledge of sanctification, but the thing that sanctifieth, it cannot receive into it selfe. So for redemption, peace, joy, hope, love, &c. it may get into the outward part of all these, but the inward part, the life, the spirit of them, it is shut out of, and cannot touch or come neer, nor can it witnesse that change, which is felt and knowne here. And here is the great contention in the world, between these two births, the one contending for their knowledge in the letter, and the other contending for their knowledge in the life: the one setting up their faith from the naturall part, calling it spirituall, and the other who have felt the stroake of God upon this (and thereby come to know the difference.) setting up the faith of the true heir, which faith hath a different beginning, and a different growth from the other, and will be welcomed into the Land and Kingdom of life, when the other will be manifested to be but the birth of the bondwoman, and be thrust forth with its mother to seek their bread abroad: for the seed of the bondwoman is not to inherite with *Isaac*, the seed of promise.

Quest. What then is that faith which is the gift of God, and which is distinct from this?

Ans. It is that power of beleeving which springs out of the seed of eternall life, and leavens the heart, not with notions of knowledge, but with the powers of life. The other faith is drawn out of mans nature, by considerations which affect the naturall part, and is kept alive by naturall exercises of reading, hearing, praying, studying, meditating in that part; but this springs out of a seed of life given, and grows up in the life of that seed, and feeds on nothing but the flesh and blood of Christ, in which is the living

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living vertue, and immortall nourishment of that which is immortal. This faith at its first entrance, strikes that part dead in which the other faith did grow : and by its growth perfects that death, and raiseth up a life which is of another nature, then ever entred into the heart of man to conceive. And by the death of this part in us, we come to know and enjoy life : and by the life we have received, know, and enjoy, we come to see that which other men call life (and which we our selves were apt to call life formerly) to be but death. And from this true knowledg, we give a true testimony to the world of what we have seen and felt, but no man receiveth our testimony. It grieves us to the heart, to see men set up a perishing thing as the way to life, and our bowells are exceedingly kindled, when we behold an honest zeal and simplicity betrayed, and in tender love do we warn men of the pit, into which they are generally running so fast, though men reward us with hatred for our good will, and become our bitter enemies because we tell them the truth, and the most necessary truth for them to know; which they can bear neither in plain words, nor yet in parables. Yet be not rough and angry, but meekly wait to read this following parable aright, and it will open into life. The parable is briefly this.

That which sold the birth-right, seeks the birth right, with tears and great pains, but shall never recover it: but there is one which lies dead (which hath the promise) which stirs not, which seeks not, till he is raised by the power of the fathers life, and then he wrestles with the father, prevails, and gets the blessing from him. Therefore know that part which is up first, and is so busie in the willing and in the running, and makes such a noise about duties, and ordinances, and graces, to keep down the life which it hath slain : and know that seed of life which is the heir, which lyes underneath all this, and must remain slain, while this lives; but if ever ye hear the voice of the Son of God, this will live, and the other dye. And happy for ever will he be, who knows this ! but misery will be his portion, who cannot witness a thorow change by the Almighty power of the living God, but hath only painted the old nature and Sepulcher, but never knew the old bottle broken, and a new one formed, which alone is able to receive and retain the new wine of the Kingdom, whereas the other (Pharisee like) can only receive a relation of the letter concerning the Kingdom.

Some

SOME

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Assertions concerning faith, its nature, rise, &c. with its receiving of Christ, and what follows thereupon, namely, a growing in his living vertue, with a knowledge of the true, living, unerring rule, and an obedience to it in the life.

Assertion I.

T*Has the true faith, the faith of the Gospel, the faith of the Elect, the faith which saves the sinner from sin, and makes him more then a conquerour over sin and the powers of darknes, is a belife in the nature of God; which belief giveth entrance into, fixeth in, and causeth an abiding in that nature. U belief entreteth into death, and fixeth in the death: faith giveth entrance into, and fixeth in the life. Faith is an ingrafting into the Vine, a partaking of the nature of the Vine, a sucking of the juice of life from the vine, which nothing is able to do but the faith, but the belife in the nature. (And nothing can beleve in the nature, but what is one with the nature.) So then, faith is not a beleeving the history of the Scripture, or a beleeving and applying the promises, or a beleeving that Christ dyed for sinners in generall, or for me in particular; for all this may be done by the unbelieving nature (like the Jew) but an uniting to the nature of God in Christ, which the unbeliever starts from, in the midst of his believing of these. Yet I do not deny that all these things are to be believed, and are believed with the true faith: But this I affirm, that they also may be believed without the true faith, and that such a belief of these doth not determin a man to be a believer in the sight of God, but onely the union with the nature of that life from whence all these sprang, and in which alone they have their true value.*

II.

That the true faith springs from the true knowledge, or comes with the true knowledge of the true nature of God in Christ, which it believes in. He can never believe in the nature of God, who hath not first the nature of God revealed to him. If a man search the Scriptures all his dayes, hear all that can be said by men concerning

concerning God, Christ, faith, justification, &c. be able to dispute about them, and think he can make his tenets good against all the world; yet if he hath not received the true knowledge of the nature of these things, all his professed faith in them cannot be true.

III.

That the true knowledge, is only to be had by the immediate revelation of Christ on the soul. No man knows the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son reveals him. The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear, shall live. There is no raising of a dead soule to life, but by the immediate voice of Christ. Outward preaching, reading the Scriptures &c may direct, and encourage men to hearken after and waite for the voice, but it is the immediate voice of Christ in the soul, which alone can quicken the soule to God: and till the light of life shine immediatly from Christ in the heart, the true knowledge is never given, 2 Cor. 4. 6. Therefore they that never yet heard the immediate voice of Christ, are still dead in their sins, and have not yet received the true living knowledge, but a dead litterall knowledge, which gives a false shining of things in the dead part, but kills the life. Indeed the proper use of all means, is to bring to the immediate voice, life, and power; and till this be done, till the soule come to that, to hear that, to feele that, to be rooted there, there is nothing done that will stand, but men stick by the way, crying up the means the means, and never knowing, tasting, or enjoying the thing which the means point to. But he that knows God, comes into the immediate presence; and he that dayly lives in God, lives in the immediate life; and the true faith leads to this, giving the soul such a touch and tast of it at first, as makes it unsatisfiable without it. By this Christ cuts off the Jewes with all their zeale and knowledge, Job. 5. 37, 38. Ye have not heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. and ye have not his word abiding in you. Theres the hearing of the voice, the sight of the shape, and the having of the word of God abiding in the heart, which gives both the hearing of the voice, and the sight of the shape, and keeps the soule quick and living in the life. The voice gives life, the sight of the shape daily conforms into the image, which is beheld by the eye of life, and the word abiding in the heart nourishes, and feeds the

the living soul with the pure bread of life. But the *Jews* knew not this, but were crying up their Sabbaths, the Law of *Moses*, the ordinances of *Moses*, the Temple of God, the instituted worship of God, and so were shut out of the thing it selfe, (which those things ended in) and out of a capacity of receiving it. And thus many zealous ones at this day, not having come to this, no more then the *Jews* did, but sticking in the letter of the Gospel, as the *Jews* did in the letter of the Law, stumble at the present dispensation of life, and cannot do otherwise.

IV.

That Christs immediate revelation of the nature of his Father, is to his babes. Not to the wise, not to the zealous, not to the studious, not to the devout, not to the rich in the knowledge of the Scriptures without: but to the weak, the foolish, the poor, the lowly in the heart. And man receives not these revelations by study, by reading, by willing, by running, &c. but by being formed in the will of life, by being begotten of the will of the Father, & by coming forth in the will, and lying still in the will, and growing up in the will, here the childe receives the wisdom which is from above, and daily learns that crosse which crucifies the other wisdom, which joyns with and pleases the other will, which loves to be feeding on the shadowy and husky part of knowledge without life. Therefore if ever thou desire to receive this knowledge from Christ, know that eye in thy self that is to be blinded, which Christ will never reveal the Father to: read at home, know the wise and prudent there, whom Christ excludes from the living knowledge. And if thou canst bear it, that eye that can read the Scriptures with the light of its own understanding, that can consider, and debate, and take up senses and meanings of it, without the immediate life and power: that's the eye, that may gather what it can from the letter, but shall never see into the life, nor tast of the true knowledge: for Christ, who alone opens and gives the knowledge, hides the pearl from that eye.

The true knowledge is only powred into the new vessell. It is the living soul alone, that receives the living knowledge of the living God from Christ the life. The old nature, the old understanding is for death and destruction. The wisdom of flesh (though painted never so like to the spirituall wisdom) is not to be spared

any where, but that wisdom with all its zeal, and growth, and progresse in religion must perish. All mens knowledge of the Scriptures which they have gathered into that part, will profite them nothing, but hinder them. Every building which the leprosie of sin hath overspread, is to be pulled down: therefore he that hath had only the old house swept and garnished, never received the true knowledge (from whence the true faith springs:) but his life lies in the oldnesse of the letter (in the conformity of the dead part to that) and he knows not the vertue of the knowledge of God in the newnes of the spirit (the vail being over his heart) which is only given to the new understanding.

V.

That this faith, which springs from the true knowledge, is Gods gift, and is not that power of beleeving which is to be found in mans nature, but of another nature, even of the nature of the giver. And when man is called to beleeve, he is not called to put forth that faith wherewith he beleeveeth other things, but to receive and exercise the gift of faith which is from above. That which is to be believed in, is spirituall: and that must be spirituall which believes in it. Man, with all the powers of his nature, is shut out: it is another thing, distinct from man, which is let into life, and which lets man in. For man receiving the faith, entering into the faith, and becoming new-formed in the faith, then he also may enter: but till then he is shut out, and knoweth not the life, let him beleeve, and read, and pray, and hear, and exercise himself in that which heeals duties and ordinances never so much: for all these, set up in the wrong part in man, they onely feed the wrong part; and that withall its food and nourishment, falls short of the life. Therefore the true entrance into religion, is to feele that power, which slayes mans naturall ability and propensity to beleeve, that so the gift of the true faith may be received: for there is no rising up and living of the second, without the death of the first, with all his naturall faculties and powers.

VI.

That by this faith alone which is the gift, which is from above, (and not that faith which grows either in the wilderness or garden of the old nature, and is fed by the oldnesse of the letter, and
not

not by the newnesse of the Spirit) *is Christ received.* For Christ can be received, by the faith alone that comes from him : and that faith which comes from him, cannot but receive him. Mans faith refuseth him : it receiveth a litherall knowledge of him from what it heareth from men, or from what it readeth related in the Scripture concerning him, but refuseth the nature of the thing : and it cannot be otherwise ; for mans faith not being of the nature of it, cannot but refuse it. But this faith, which is given of God, which is from above, being of the same life and nature with Christ, cannot refuse the spring of its own life, but receiveth him immediately. There is no distance of time, but so soon as faith is received, Christ is received, and the soul united to him in the faith. As unbeliefe immediately shuts him out, so faith lets him in immediately, and centers the soul in him : and the immortall soule feels the immortall vertue, and rejoyces in the proper spring of its own immortall nature. But the faith of man never reaches this, never receives Christ, but only a relation of things concerning him: and with that faith which stands in the letter, opposes that faith which stands in the life. And here's the spirit of Antichrist, here's the mystery of iniquity working out of one forme into another : for Antichrist does not directly deny Christ, or deny the letter, but cryes up Christ, cryes up the letter, cryes up ordinances, but so as they may feed the faith of his own nature, and maintain an hope there. And thus the spirit of man is at unity with what will feed his own, with what interpretations his own understanding can gather out of the Scriptures. And thus can he cry up Christ, and say he hopes to be saved by him, while the spirit of enmity against the nature of Christ lodgeth in his heart. This is Antichrist, where ever he is found, and this is his faith, and great is his knowledg, and many are his coverings, but the Lord is searching him out, who will strip him, and make his nakednesse appear.

VII.

That Christ is received as a grain of mustard seed. Christ is such a thing, as every eye, but the eye of this faith despiseth. He is the stone, which the wisdom of the builders in all ages hath rejected. They look for a glorious Messiah, but they know him not in his humiliation in the little seed, out of which he is to grow up into his glory: and so they missing of the thing, build up only with high

imaginations in the airy mind concerning the thing. As when God sent Christ in the flesh, there was no form nor beauty in him; The *Jews*, whose hope and expectation lay there, yet saw no manner of comeliness, no desirableness in him: Even so it is now; When God comes to offer him to those, that think they place all their hopes in him, they see no loveliness in him, but refuse him daily. What this little thing, small like a grain of mustard-seed, can this be the glorious Christ, which the Scriptures have spoke so much of? why we know the descent of this (its father mother and kindred are with us) we find this in our own nature. Thus, like the *Jews* of old, they make a great noise about Christ, but refuse the thing it selfe. And this is for want of the true eye of faith, for if they had that eye, they would see the vertue in the little seed, and receive him in his humiliation in their hearts, where he knocks daily for entrance, and be content to wait till this grain of mustard-seed grow up into a great and glorious tree. But for want of this eye, they keep him out, and let in the painted murderer, who dwells in them, and covers himselfe, with a knowledg, a zeal, a faith, an hope, &c. in the old nature, in the old vessel, in the old understanding: & thus they give God and Christ good words, while the evill spirit has their hearts, and dwells there, bringing forth his own old evill fruit under an appearance of devotion and holiness. Hear now, ye wise in the letter, but strangers to the life; There is a twofold appearance of Christ in the heart. There is an appearance of him as a servant to obey the law, to fulfill the will of the Father in that body, which the father prepares there for him: and there is an appearance of him in glory, to reign in the life and power of the Father. And he that knows not the first of these in his heart, shall never know the second there. And he that knows not these inwardly, shall never know any outward visible coming to their comfort. For if Christ should come outwardly to reign (as many expect) yet to be sure he would not reign in thee, whose heart he hath not first entred into and subdued to himself, which is only to be done by his appearance there first as a servant, and then as a King. But what estate are Christians (so called) now in, who know not him in them who is able to serve the Lord, but are striving and fighting in that nature where sin hath the power, and which can never overcome, being not in union with, but strangers to that life and power which is the conquerour?

querour ? Therefore let all consider in the depth of their hearts, for this is infallibly true : They that never received the seed of life in their hearts, never received Christ ; and such shall never and such shall never be free from sin while they live (for having not received the son, who makes free, how can they be free indeed ? nor be free from wrath when they are dead : For that faith concerning Christ will not save them hereafter, which did not bring them to receive Christ here.

VIII.

That this seed being received, groweth up into its own form, or is formed in that creature, into which it is received. It there groweth up into the body, in which it is to serve the Lord, and which body is to be glorified, when it hath finished its service. As a seed cast into fitted earth, or the seed of man or beast sowed in a fitting womb, receiveth form and groweth into a plant or living creature : so is it with this seed in its earth. Open the true eye, O ye Christians, and begin to read the mystery of godliness !

IX.

That this creature, or the spirit of life in this creature (which it is in union with, and which is never seperated from it) is the Christians rule, Gal. 6. 15, 16, 1 John 2. 27. Heb. 8. 10, 11. The Son is never without the Spirit of the Father, no not in the seed : and the Spirit of the Father is the sons rule. Outward rules were given to a state without, to men who were not brought to the life, but were exercised under shadows and representations of the life: but the Son who is within, who is the substance of all, who is the life, who is one with the Father, whose proper right the Spirit is, he is not tyed to any outward rule, but is to live and walk in the immediate light of the Spirit of his own life. And he that hath the Son, hath this rule : and he that hath not this rule, hath not the Son. And he that hath not the Son, hath not the true faith (which immediately receives him) and so is no Christian, but hath stoln the name from the letter, having never received the nature from the Spirit, to which alone the name belongs.

X.

He that hath Christ (or the seed of eternal life, which is Christ) formed

formed in him, which seed the Spirit alwayes dwells in, and never is absent from, which is the same Spirit which gave forth the Scriptures, he is a capacity of understanding those Scriptures which that Spirit gave forth, as that spirit leads him into the understanding of them. But he that hath not received that which is like the grain of mustard seed, and so hath not Christ, nor his Spirit (what ever he may pretend to) he by all his studies, arts, languages, reading of expositors, conferences, nay experiences, can never come to the true knowledge of the Scriptures: for he wants the true key, which alone can open. He may have got a great many wrong keys, none of which can open, but wants the true key of the true knowledge, and so is shut out of that, and only let into such a kind of knowledge, as the wrong key can open into. And with this kind of knowledge the marchants of *Babilon* have long traded, but their day is expiring apace, and their night of lamentation and howling hasteneth.

XI.

*Though he can understand the Scriptures, as the Spirit leads him into the knowledge of them, and can see his zeal to the truth of them, yet he cannot call them his rule: for having received the life for his rule, and knowing it to be so, he cannot call another thing it. He that hath received the new covenant into his heart, with the laws of the life thereof written there by the Spirit of life, who doth write them there even in the least of all that beleve, as well as in the greatest, he knoweth that this living writing is his rule. The Scriptures give relation where the covenant and law of life is writ, and if I will read it, thither must I go whither the Scriptures point me. I must go to Christ the book of life, and read there with that eye which Christ gives, if I read the things of life. And the Scriptures are willing to surrender up their glory to Christ, who was before them, and is above them, and shall be after them: but there is a false spirit, which hath seated it selfe in a litterall knowledge of the Scriptures, and hath formed images and likenesses of truth from it (every one after the imaginations of his own heart) and all these fall, if Christ the life appear: and so this Spirit cryes up the Scriptures now in a way of deceit, just as the *Jews* cryed up *Moses*. It was a good remove to withdraw the ear from the false Church, and to listen to the true testi-*

testimony which the Scriptures give of Christ: but it is the seducing spirit which tempts to stick by the way, and to rear up buildings and forms of knowledge from the letter of the Scriptures, and not to come to feel after, unity with, and live in Christ the life. And unlesse ye come to this, your reading of the Scripture is vain, and all your gathering rules of practise, and comforts from promises, will end in vanity: for untill ye know, and have received the thing it selfe, ye are at a distance from that to which all belongs. A lively and glorious testimony of truth hath God held forth in this age, at which all that stick in the letter cannot but stumble; and there is no possibillity of knowing or receiving it, but by feeling the true touch of the inward life of it. Wisdome is justified of her children: but they that are not born of her, cannot justifie her womb or birth.

To the *Jews* who were an outward people, there was an outward rule given, a law of commandements, statutes, judgements, and ordinances, proper to that state wherein they were, and to that thing to which the ministry was: But all this was to be done away, and to end in that which all this represented. So that to Christians, Christ the substance being come, which is the end of all these shadows, the true *Jew* being raised in the immediate life, now there is a necessity of the immediate life for the rule. To them under the Gospel, to them who are come to the substance, to them who are begotten and born in the life, there can be no rule proportionable to their state, but Christ the substance, Christ the life, here he alone is the light, the way, the truth, the rule, the Spirit is here the rule, the new creature the rule, the new covenant the rule, all which are in unity together, and he that hath one of them, hath them all, and he that hath not them all, hath none of them. So that directions taken out of the Scripture, cannot be the rule to him who is the true Christian, but the measure of grace, the measure of light, the measure of the Spirit, the measure of the gift received into the living soule from the spring of life, this is the alone rule of life. But Christians in the degeneration have lost this, and so have taken up words for a rule, (which were not given to that end) and so with deductions by the earthly part, they feed the earthly part. What is fed by mens Scripture knowledge, but the earthly understanding? the earthly will heated, the earthly affections warmed, and of the fruits of this earth they bring sacrifices

to God : and they are angry that God hath raised up *Abel*, their younger brother, who offers up the Lamb of God to God, and serves the living God in his own living spirit, and with the faith that comes from him. *Abels* religion stands not in that part wherein all other mens religion stands, but in the death of that part ; and in the raising up of another part, wherein life springs. Can ye mildly receive these gentle leadings ? do not provoke the tender heart of the Lamb against you, who also hath the voice of a Lyon, and can roar terribly out of his holy mountain against the enemies of his life and Spirit.

A

Necessary warning, and of very great importance to all that call themselves Christians, and hope for a share in the book of life, and the escaping the damnation of hell, which is their portion whose names are written in the booke of death, and blotted by God out of the book of life, though they hope to find them written there. Hear and consider.

IT is recorded, Rev. 22. 18, 19. *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues, that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy City, and from the things which are written in this book.*

Great are the plagues that are written in this book, even the pouring out of eternall wrath without mixture, torments day and night in the presence of the Lamb, &c. As the growth, and fulness of the mystery of iniquity is spoken of in this book : so the measuring out of the fulnesse of wrath to it, is spoken of also. And great is the life and blessedness, that is here promised to those that fight with, and overcome the mystery of iniquity, and receive not any
of

of the marks or names of the beast, nor are subject to any of his hornes, though he push never so hard with them. Now to meet with all the plagues here threatned, and to miss of all the blessednesse here promised, is it not a sad state? Why, he that addeth to these things here spoken, or diminisheth from the words of this prophecy, the Lord hath said this shall befall him. Therefore in the fear of that God who hath spoken this, and will make it good, let every one search who is the adder, who is the diminisher?

Now mark, see if this be not a clear thing, He that giveth any other meaning of any Scripture, then what is the true proper meaning thereof, he both addeth and diminisheth; he taketh away the true sence, he addeth a sence that is not true. The Spirit of the Lord is the true Expofitor of Scriptures, he never addeth nor diminisheth: but man (being without that Spirit) doth but guess, doth but imagine, doth but study or invent a meaning, and so he is ever adding or diminishing. This is the sence saith one, this is the sence saith another, this is the sence saith a third, this saith, a fourth: another that is witty, and large in his comprehension, he sayes they will all stand: another, perhaps more witty then he, sayes none of them will stand, and he invents a meaning different from the all. And then, when they are thus expounding them they will say, take the sence thus, it will yeeld this observation, or take it thus, and it will afford this observation. Doth not this plainly shew, that he who thus saith, hath not the Spirit of the Lord to open the Scripture to him, and manifest which is the true sence, but is working in the mystery of darknesse? And yet this very person, who is thus working with his own dark spirit in the dark, will in words confesse, that there is no true understanding or opening of Scripture but by the Spirit of God. If it be so, how darrest thou set thy imagination, thy fancy, thy reason, thy understanding on work, and so be guessing at that which the Spirit doth not open to thee, and so art found adding and diminishing?

Now he that is the adder, he that is the diminisher, he cryeth out against the Spirit of the Lord, and chargeth him with adding and diminishing: for man being judge, he will judge his own way to be true, and Gods to be false. That which is the adding and diminishing, he calls the true expounding of the place: but

if the Spirit of the Lord immediately open any thing to any son or daughter, he cries this is an adding to the word: The Scripture is written, there are no more revelations to be expected now, the curse saith he, is to them that adde. Thus he removes the curse from his own Spirit, and way of study and invention to which it appertains, and calls it upon the Spirit of the Lord. And man cannot possibly avoid this in the way that he is: for having first judged his own darknesse to be light, then in the next place he must needs judge the true light to be darknesse. He that hath aforehand set up his own invented meaning of any Scripture to be the true meaning, he must needs oppose the true meaning, and call it false, and so apply himselfe to forme all the arguments he can out of other Scriptures, to make it appear false. Thus man, having begun wrong in his knowledge of the Scriptures, stands engaged to make use of them against the Lord, and against his own soul; and yet reall; in himself thinks that he makes a right use of them, and that he serves the Lord, and that he is not opposing his truth, but opposing error and heresie; while he himselfe is in the error, and in the heresie, and against the truth, being a stranger to that Spirit, in whose immediate life and presence the truth grows.

Did the Lord in these words, of forbidding to adde or diminish upon so great a penalty, lay a restraint and limit upon his owne spirit, that it should no more hereafter speak in his sons & daughters, or did he intend to lay bounds upon the unruly spirit of man? Did God leave mans spirit at liberty to invent and form meanings of his words, and bind up his owne spirit from speaking further words afterwards? When *Moses* said, thou shalt not adde nor diminish, was this to be any stop to the Prophets, in whom God should speake afterwards? Is not this one of the subtle Serpents inventions, to keep up the esteem of mans invented meanings as the true sence, and to make a fortification against the entrance of that spirit, which can discover all his false interpretations of the true words of God, and to make him see that he is the adder and the diminisher, and that his name will not be found in the book of life, when the true light is held forth to read by.

But this is generall, extending to all Scriptures, my drift is more particular concerning adding to the things, or diminishing from the words of the book of this prophecy.

There are two things chiefly spoken of in this book, Mystery-

Sion, Mystery-Babylon : the true Church, the false Church : the Lambs wife, the whore : the hiding of *Mystery-Sin*, the appearing of *Mystery-Babylon* in her place : the flying of the Church out of her heaven into the wilderness, leaving all behind her which she could not carry along with her, even all the ordinances and institutions of Christ, wherein once she appeared worshipping and serving God ; and the starting of the false Church into her place, taking up all that she had left, even all the ordinances and institutions of Christ in the letter, thus covering her selfe with the form of godlinesse, with the sheeps cloathing, that she might passe the better for the true Church : And the Dragon, who mannaged the war against the woman and her seed, raiseth up first one beast, and then another, and sets this whore on the top of them, who with the cup of fornication makes all the earth drunk, all nations, peoples, kindreds, tongues, languages. And the beast he has his horns every where, his marks every where, his names every where, and also his image in every part of *Babylon*. And who will not worship him, he fights with ; yea such as are led by God to rent from the whore, he calls schismaticks, hereticks, blasphemers, and persecutes them as persons not worthy to live. Thus the state of things is quite changed, the power of truth lost, the form set up without it ; those that seek after the power hated, persecuted and blasphemed, those that lye still under any of the beasts forms, they go for good Christians ; for members of the visible Church, so called by them.

Now mark : He that calls any thing the Church, but what this book calls the Church, he adds : he that doth not know the wilderness, and own the Church in the wilderness, he diminishes : The Church of *Rome* is not the Church in the wilderness, the Church of *Scotland* is not the Church in the wilderness, the Church of *England* is not the Church in the wilderness, the severall gathered Churches are none of them the Church in the wilderness : all these have sprung up since the Churches flight, and have appeared in her absence, usurping her name, appropriating it to themselves, but God (who gave it to the Church) hath not given it them ; and so they must lose it again, when God brings back the Church out of the wilderness. So he that calls those, which formerly were the institutions and ordinances of Christ, which the woman left behinde her, and which the harlot hath

got and attired her self with, which she now appears in, and wherewith the Dragon is now worshipped, he adds to this book, which says the outward court was given to the Gentiles, and the true Church had nothing left her but the inward temple, wherein alone the true worshippers worshipped: and they that worship elsewhere, are the false worshippers worshipping in false Temples, in Temples of the whorish spirits building take it either outwardly or inwardly, for it holds true in both: He that makes the beasts names fewer then they are, or his marks fewer then they are, or his horns fewer then they are, or his image lesse then it is, he diminishes. And the danger hereof is not small. For if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drinke of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smok of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. And they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name, Rev. 14. 9, &c.

Now this I affirm, whosoever has not the name of *Sion*, the mark of *Sion*, which he received of her in the wilderness, where the living God is with her, and where he is taught by God the laws of the wilderness-worship, and in some measure to testify against all the corrupted ordinances, and institutions which have the beasts marks, and go now abroad in the world under the beasts name: I say, whoever has not the true mark of *Sion*, it is impossible for him to avoid the mark of *Babylon*: and he who avoids not the mark, cannot escape the plagues. But he that hath the mark of *Sion*, he by a secret inward instinct of true life, is led from the marks of *Babylon*: and if he faithfully follow the guidance, from out of all the names, and from under all the horns.

It is not enough to rent from Popery, and sit down under the power and government of the same spirit in another form, or to rent from Episcopacy, and the same spirit sit down in Presbitery; or to rent from Presbitery, and the same spirit sit down in a form of Independency, or Anabaptisme; or to rent from these, and the same spirit sit down in a way of seeking and waiting, and reading of words of Scripture, and gathering things from thence without the life: but the true religion consists in knowing, and following

following a true guide to the Church in the wilderness, and there to receive the marke, the living marke, which will preserve out of all inventions, and further progresse of the dead spirit.

Now therefore look about you, know the spirit of whoredom, and see how ye have been begotten in the adultery, and born of the whore, and have served the Dragon, and worshipped his dead idols, and not the living God. And be not satisfied with changing of forms & dresse) which are but the several deceitful appearances of the whore (but put off that spirit, least when ye have hated the whore, and burnt her flesh as she appeared in one form, ye give your selves up to her again, when she appears in another forme: for the plagues are not so much to the form wherein the whore appears, as to the whorish spirit: and whosoever is found under her dominion, in any of her territories, under any of her formes, with that mark of hers upon them which belongs to that particular form, though never so curiously painted, he shall drink of the unmixed cup of wrath.

Therefore tremble all sorts of people, pluck off your false coverings, see the shame of your nakednesse, while it may be for your advantage so to doe. The Angel is gone forth, the corn is reaping and gathering into the garner, many Lambs are brought into the fold of everlasting rest, *Sion* is redeeming, the true life is rising, the whorish spirit is judging, the doore of life is yet open: doe not lye secure in the whores wisdom! Do not lye slumbering, and reasoning, and disputing from the letter of the Scripture, till the gathering be finished, till the doore be shut, till the eternal flames seize upon you, and ye find your selves in the bosome of hell unawares, and see the children of the Kingdom in *Abrahams* bosom, but your selves shut out, and left to weep and waile and gnash your teeth.

Quest. But how may I avoid adding to the things, and diminishing from the words of this prophecy, and of other Scriptures, that I may not meet with the weight of this curse, or misse of the blessing?

Ans. Dost thou ask this question from thy heart, in the simplicity, out of the fleshly wisdom? then hearken with that ear, and thou shalt set thy seal to mine answer.

1. Wait for the key of knowledge, which is Gods free gift.

Do

Do not go with a false key to the Scriptures of truth, for it will not open them. Man is too hasty to know the meaning of the Scriptures, and to enter into the things of God, and so he climbs up over the doore with his own understanding, but he has not patience to wait to know the door, and to receive the key which opens and shuts the doore: and by this means he gathers death, out of words which came from life. And this I dare positively affirme, that all that have gone this way to work, have but a dead knowledge, and it is death in them that feeds upon this knowledg, and the life is not raised. Consider now the weight of this counsell in the true ballance! There is no opening of the Scriptures, but by the true key: nor is there any coming at the key, till the Lord please to give it. What then is to be done, but only to wait (in the silence of that part which would be forward, and running before hand) till the key be given, and to know how to receive it, as it is offered in the light, and not to wait in the will, or expect to receive it according to observations in the fleshly wisdom from the letter?

2. Let not thy understanding have the manning of this key, when it is given, but know the true opener, the skilfull user of the key, the hand which can only turn the key aright: and let him have the manning both of his own key, and of thine understanding. Do not run in thine own understanding, or in thine owne will to search out the meaning of Scripture; for then thou feedest with the Scripture, that which it is the intent of all words of life to destroy: but as thou waitest for the key at first, so continually wait for the appearances and movings of the user of the key, and he will shut out thy understanding and will continually, which would still be running after the litterall part of Scriptures, and let thee into the life both of the prophecies and doctrines thereof. Man when he hath received a true gift from God, he would be manning of it himselfe, and to be sure he will mannage it for himselfe (for the gratifying and pleasing of himself, and not for God) and then God, being provoked, takes away the substance, and leaves him the shell. Therefore he that hath received a gift, must be very watchfull against that which would betray, or he may easily loose it: for though the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, yet if that lay hold of the gift which was not called, and to which it was not given, the Lord will thrust that by, and take away his gift from it.

3. Do not graft any of the fruit of the tree of life upon the tree of knowledge, for it will not grow there: an appearance, a likeness of the true fruit may grow there, but the true fruit it selfe will not. My meaning is, doe not make a treasury of knowledge in the understanding part which is to perish, but know the true treasury of all the things of life, which is in the life it selfe, and in that understanding which is formed, kept, and lives in the life. Lay no manna by to feed upon in the old store house (lest the fleshly part should be running thither, when its fleshly appetite is kindled after food) but daily receive the continuall bread from the hand of life. The wisdom of the life strikes at by wisdom and understanding, and if ever thou wilt grow wise any more there, thou loosest this, and canst not possibly retaine it: for that part is then getting up in thee, in which it cannot be held, but only a shadow, an image, a resemblance and likeness of it, which feedeth and pleases that part, which saith would have life, but cannot know it, and therefore is necessitated to make images and likenesses, of things in Heaven or things in earth, that it might have somewhat.

4. Take not up a rest in openings of things, though by the true key. Take heed of over-valluing that kind of knowledge: for that part which over-vallues that knowledge, will presently be puffed up with it: but there is a more excellent, and safer kind of knowledge to be pressed after, which is a knowledge of things by receiving of them. There is a knowledge of things, by the Spirits opening the words which speake of them (or by inward immediate prophecies from the word of life in the heart:) this is an excellent knowledge, and not to be found in the earthly part of man; yet the earthly part (when this knowledge is given) is very apt to be swelled and exalted with it: but then there is also a knowledge, which ariseth from the gift of the thing it selfe. This knowledge is very precious, and much more full and certain then the other, having the nature and immediate power of life in it self, and so is perfectly able to preserve. As for instance, to make it more plaine: There may be a knowledge of justification, by the Spirits opening the words written in Scripture concerning justification, and the blood of sprinkling, (and this is a good knowledge, where there is a true opening of it from the Spirit:) but then there is a knowledge by feeling of the blood of sprinkling in the heart, and by seeing with the new eye the way of its justification;

cation; and in this knowledge is the power and the cleansing of the life received, which in the other was but spoken of. Therefore rest not in openings, or prophecies, or true meanings of these things (though this kind of knowledge is very excellent, and hath been very rare) but wait to feele the thing it selfe, which the words speak of, and to be united by the living Spirit to that, and then thou hast a knowledge from the nature of the thing it selfe: and this is more deep and inward, then all the knowledge that can be had from words concerning the thing.

5. When thou seelest things, then seek their preservation in the proper spring of their own life. Let the root bear thee, and all thy knowledge, with all thats freely given thee of God. When thou seelest thy selfe leavened with the life, and become a branch shot out of the life, then learn how to abide in the life, and to keep all thats given thee there, and have nothing which thou maist call thine own any more, but to be lost in thy selfe, and found in him. Know the land of the living, wherein all the things of life live, and can live no where else.

Now in all this, in this whole course, from the very first step of it, there's certainty, there's stability, there's infallibility. From the very first opening of the true key, I begin to learne somewhat of God, and to learn certainly, and feel an assurance and establishment in it: and growing up here, I grow up in the true learning, and in the true settlement, and so I am not unlearned and unstable, wresting the Scriptures to my own destruction: for I take none of the knowledge of the Scriptures from my selfe, from my own understanding, from my own study and invention, or from the studies of other expositors, but from a certain hand. And how can he rest Scripture, who is kept single, and has no desire to have any thing to be the meaning of it, but what is the meaning, nor no will to know the meaning, further then the good wil of him whose Spirit penned it, thinks good to give forth the meaning to him; and who waits to receive this, not to feed the lustfull knowing part in himselfe, but to feed the life with it? and when the life hath no use for it, he is content to have it shut up, and to be without it: I say, how is it possible for this man to wrest Scriptures? But now, a man that hath taken in a body of knowledge already, he goes to the Scripture, and bends it to make it speak answerable to that: and where it speaks contrary, he invents a way to make it comply,

and

and so wrests Scriptures forward & backward, to make them speak agreeable to what he has already received and beleev'd. Thus every sort of persons, papists and protestants, bend the Scriptures to make them speak conformable to their opinions and practises, not having *the true learning*, which gives to read them in the true Originall, where the knowledge of what they speak and meane is certaine: and so they are also *unstable*, and subject to be shaken by a wind of reason which is stronger then their own. And this wresting of Scripture is *to their own destruction*; for that part, which is so much as desirous to bend a Scripture, is to be destroyed; and that part cannot receive the true knowledge, but stumbles in its own wisdom and way of seeking, at the wisdom of God, and at the true way of finding.



But the foregoing concill, faithfully hearkened unto, will preserve out of this, and also bring to the true means, and to the true use of the means, which all nations, who have drunk of the whores cup, have erred concerning, and taken the false for the true. The strength of this wine hath made all nations, peoples, tongues and languages to mistake, who in the heat of their drinke have cryed up the means, the means, the ordinances, the ordinances &c. not perceiving how this heat came from the spirits of the whores wine, and not from the sober, meek, calm, gentle leadings of the Spirit of Christ, and so in a fleshly zeale have set up the whores means instead of the lambs means, and contend for them with the whores spirit and weapons. Now it is impossible for any man so much as to know the true means: till the whores wine be purged out of him: for that will make him erre in judgment, and take the false for the true. And which way shall he ever come to the Kingdome, which has lighted upon the wrong means? or how shall he ever come to the true means, who never yet saw the witchery of the whorish spirit from the life, and how he himselfe has been bewicht, and cosened with the false instead of the true? as for instance.

Prayer, that is generally taken for a means, *Aske, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. If Parents, which are evill, know how to give good gifts to their children: how much more shall the heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that aske him.* This therefore is an undoubted thing, that prayer is a means.

Ans. True, there is a prayer which is a means, and there is a prayer which is not a means. There is a prayer which is an ordinance, and there is a prayer which is an invention. There is a prayer which is the breath of the true child, and there is a prayer which is the breath of the fleshly part, a breath of the whorish spirit. There is a prayer of the first birth, and there is a prayer of the second birth, both which cry and weep to God for the same thing. Now the one of these is the true means, the other not: one of them is Christs ordinance, the other is antichrists ordinance. Now the question is, which of these thy prayer is? whether it be thine own breath, or Gods breath? whether it come from the renewings of the Spirit of life, or from thine own naturall part painted? for accordingly, it is either the true means, or the false means. If it be the true means, it shall have the thing, the Spirit, the life, the kingdome it prays for: if it be the false means, it can never obtain it. Papists, they pray; Protestants, they pray; some in forms, some without forms; some meditating before hand, some not meditating: are all these the true means, or are any of them the true means? The breath of the true child is the only true prayer; and he prays only in the moving, and in the leading of that Spirit that begat him: and this is a prayer according to the will, in the life, and from the power. But all mens prayers, according to times they set to themselves, or according to formings of desires in their own minds, which they offer up to God with the nature and heart that sinneth against him, these are false means, and may satisfie the drunken spirit err'd from the life, but are no means to the truth.

Canst thou pray? how camest thou to learn to pray? wast thou taught from above? or didst thou gain the skill and ability, by the exercise and improvement of thine own naturall part? Didst thou begin with sighs and groans, staying there, till the same spirit that taught thee to groan, taught thee also to speak? Wast thou ever able to distinguish the sighs and groans of the Spirit begetting, from the sighs and groans of thy own naturall and affectionate part? and hath that part, with all its sighings, groaning, desires, endeavours, &c. been thrust aside, and the seed immortall raised by the Spirit of eternall life, which teacheth to cry and mourn, and at length to speak to the Father for the preservation and nourishment of its life? If it hath been thus with thee

thee, then thou hast known that prayer which is the true means. But if otherwise, though thou pray never so long, and with never so great affections and strong desires, this is all but the fall means, with its fall warmth from the fall fire, this is but the means which the whorish Spirit (which is not in union with the life and power, but keeps the seed in bondage) has set up instead of the true means. And this can never lead to truth, but keeps alive Gods enemy under this pleasant covering: neither is this the worship of the living God, but as it is from another spirit, so it is to another spirit.

O learn to be sober! come out of this drunken fury, and consider things mildly and seriously. Do not make a great outcry of ordinances, ordinances; the means, the means. This is the voyce of the clamorous woman, who with her loud noise, would faine keep you from listning after the still voyce of true wisdom, which cannot be heard in the midst of this great noise and hurry in your spirits; but consider which are the true ordinances, which are the true means; which are the likenesses man has framed, and which is the true thing it self. And if ye could once be mild, gentle and calm, & turn from your own wisdom and fleshly knowledge of things it might please God to remove your stumbling blocks, and to open that eye in you which can see the antichristian nature, and discern between the coverings, which it hath formed to hide its deceitfull spirit under, and the true garment and cloathing of life. But the seed of the Kingdome is little, and ye are great, how can ye enter into it? the pearl lies hid in the field, and ye are gazing up to Heaven how can ye see it? Christ is descended into the lower parts of the earth, and ye are using means to ascend upwards in the wrong nature, how can ye meet with him? the Gospel hath been hid, the Sun hath not shined, it hath been night, and ye have got many fall candles; which way can ye acknowledge the little glimmering of the day star, who have such satisfaction in the warmth of your false fires? ye are far from the true light, who have not yet received so much of it, as to discover the darknesse of the night! Ye are too high, too wise, too knowing for Christ, or for the sight and acknowledgment of the true means which lead to life. And if ye could once come to see this, there might be some hope but in that wisdom wherein your life and knowledge stands, ye are shut out: and ye are reasoning and stumbling at the stone, while others (who are broken in spirit, and in meeknesse and humility led to try) find

it a sure foundation, even a foundation of eternall life for the true seed of life, and are built into the living City, which is made without hands, and without any of the tools of mans wisdom.

A

Brief History of the state of the Church since the dayes of the Apostles, with the living seal to it, which he that hath eternall life abiding in him, can read and witnes; but that wisdom, zeal and devotion which is in the death, cannot.

After the universal degeneration and corruption of the *Jewish* state, and the putting an end to the shadows thereof, by the appearance and succession of the substance, it pleased God to dissolve that people, state and pollicy, and by the power of his life (without either the wisdom or strength of man) to set upon the heathenish world, which he subdued and brought under the power of his life. By his Apostles and messengers, who preached the everlasting Gospel, the word of eternall life, he gathered assemblies up and down the nations, whom the nations by all their persecutions could not subject; but they reigned over them in the power, authority, and dominion of God: For they were Kings and Priests to God in the sight of all the Nations, and they did reign upon the earth; in so much as the heathenish spirit of man, observing their order in the Spirit, and the wisdom and power of the Spirit among them, who by his living light was able to search the hearts of those that came to observe them, could not but acknowledge, that God was in them of a truth.

Now the next thing to be expected, is Satans opposition against this power of life, & his stratagems to undermine it. He withstood the growth and settlement of the Church, all that he could by open force, making use both of the heathenish devout worshippers, who fought for their *Jupiter*, their *Diana*, and other gods and goddeses, and of the *Jewish* devout worshippers, who fought for their Temple-worship, with the Laws and ordinances of *Moses*, which were now expired. But neither of these would doe, but the Church in the power of life gained ground upon him, and did rather thrive and increase, then diminish by this opposition. There-

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fore now he falls to his stratagems, he gets some false brethren out of the Church (*they went out from us*) these he cloaths as Angels of light, puts the sheeps cloathing on their wolvissh nature, makes them appear as like the Apostles as may be, endues them with an excellent taking knowledge of life and spirituality in appearance, forms in them an image of the truth, and inspires this image with the spirit of his own life, and with these he goes forth into the world, and gathers the world about him. Now the world was presently taken with this (*the world went after him*) for this is that the world would have, an appearance of religion, an image of truth, but their own spirit in it. The worldly spirit, that flies off from the life, from the power, can readily close with this, because it is its own. Bring forth never so high notions of religion and spiritual wisdom, the world will hug them, the world will feed on them, the world will cloath it selfe with them. The world can swallow, and digest any thing but life. Any pleasant picture of things in heaven will down with the world: but the nature, the life, the truth, the Spirit, Christ in his true and living crosse, this will not down with the world.

Now the Devil having thus set up his false image in the world, and gathered a party after him, then he sets upon the Church: and the battel goeth very hard, life striving to defend, and death to overcome, How hard did the Apostles strive in their day, to keep their converts to the simplicity of truth, & to the way thereof (which even then began to be evil spoken of) writing Epistles to the Churches, warning them of the false Apostles, and wishing them to stand their ground! yea Christ himselfe writes severall Epistles from heaven to some of them, cheking their backslidings and encouraging them to renew their zeal and strength, putting them in mind of the Crown which attended the victory. But at length the Divill with his stratagems prevails, gets the possession of the Churches territories, and the Church is faine to fly for her preservation: and such of her seed as are left behind her, the enemy makes war against, slayes, drinks their blood.

Now here's an end of all the glory of that state: now the Divil hath gained the world again: The same spirit, that lost it under the heathenish power (for there he was conquered) recovers it under an Antichristian appearance; setting up the same wickednes, and the same course and current of death under forms of Antichristian

Asian religion, as he had done before under forms of Heathenish devotion.

Thus the Devil being conquerour, having gained the field, he divides the spoils among his army: he tak's whatever was the Churches, and make his own, and ranks them in his way of Anti-christian religion and devotion: so that now hence forward, those things which were once Christs and the Churches, they are now all his, and distributed by him among his followers. He gives the name Church to the whore which he sets up, he gives the name Christian to his Disciples, he prescribes baptisme, and the Supper (which he calls Sacraments) and praying, and preaching, and singing, which he calls publique ordinances, and he prescribes private duties and exercises of devotion; and he gets the letter of the Scriptures, and forms multitudes of meanings and expositions, and has lying signs and wonders for such as need them, that he might keep all the severall Brigades of his army quiet under his pay, and might have some pleasing wares of traffick for every sort of his Merchants in his *Babylon*. For this is the City of that King, which he built after his conquest over the life, and which he hath enriched with the spoils from the life. And here all his subjects shall have content, they shall have what they will, if they will but be faithfull to him in the main. Call for what likensse, what invention, what appearance of truth they will, they shall have it, so they will but be content without life. No notion about the Spirit will he deny them, so they will be content with the notion without the presence of the living Spirit. They shall have light in their understandings, warmth in their affections, joy, peace, hope, comfort out of the Scriptures. They shall apply as many promises to themselves as they will, have what they will, do what they will, so they keep out of the feeling of the living principle: but if once that stir, and there be any hearkning after that, then he begins to shew his tyranny on the one hand to force them back, and his stratagems on the other hand to tempt them aside from it. The devil, having thus gained the form, and enriched himself with the Churches spoils, and slain them which had the living testimony, then he falls to corrupting the form: For that filthy spirit, though he can cloath himself with the form to deceive from the life, & abide there, to keep down the life, yet he does not much love it, he loves his own form better: and when he is out of feare of assaults

assaults from the life, then he returns to his own form againe, or patches up a garment more suitable to his own nature, taking in somewhat of the other with it, to make his own passe the better (for if he should have returned to the direct heathenish forms of idolatry and false worship: he could not so well have layn hid: therefore he makes a mix u e of somewhat which was prescribed the *Jews*, with some things found practised among the Christians.) Thus he brought in inventions of crosses, and images, and beads, and pictures, and reliques, and ceremonies beyond number, inso-much as not only the life and power was lost, but the true likeness also, even so lost, that it is impossible for all the wisdom of man, to recover the knowledge of the likenesse againe. Men have striven much, but they never could form a true likenesse of the Primitive Church, and the way thereof.

Now, though it is the desire of the Devill to keep men in the grossnesse of darkness, yet rather then loose them, he will let them have some part of the form again: nay he will tempt them with a gaudy appearance of the form, to keep them from meeting with the power and life, when he perceives true secret inward stirrings in them, which will not be quieted without somewhat. Thus, when there was a stirring against Popery, he tempted aside into Episcopacy: when that would hold no longer, then to Presbitery: when that will not serve, into Independancy: when that will not keep quiet, but still there are searchings further, into Anabaptism: if that will not doe, into a way of seeking and waiting: if this will not satisfie, they shall have high notions, yea most pleasant notions concerning the Spirit, and concerning the life, if they will be but satisfied without the life: yea they shall have all the liberty in the creatures they can desire (the best painted liberty) if they will but be satisfied without that liberty, which stands not in the creatures out of the life, but over the creatures in the life. And he that turns aside to any of these, he is still under the dominion of that spirit, and there he holds his knowledge, and there he performes his worship, and there he has his unity, his liberty, his life, his rest, his peace, his joy, his hope. Now no man can worship God, till he comes out of every part of this *Babilon*, and his feet touch *Sion*, though there may be a secret panning, and an unknown safety, and an acceptation of the poor mourning soul in the passage. Yea; all sorts of people, here ye were accepted, in your stirrings after life,
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in hearkning to the leadings of life from out of the Babilonish Spirit: but your turning aside to the Babilonish wildome in a new dresse, and sitting down in a new form of her inventing, hath brought you to a losse of life, and hath made you hatefull to the living God, who hath drawn his sword against you, and hath prepared his vialls, his thunders, his plagues, his woes: and ye must drink of his cup with sorrow, as ye have drunk of the whores cup with pleasure. Ye that have found a bed of pleasure in any of your forms, or in any of your notions, and so have found ease in the *Sion* of the whores painting; ye must be cast into the bed of sorrow, and know the fire in Gods *Sion*, and the furnace in his *Jerusalem*, if ever ye become an habitation for God, or expect to feed on his holy mountaine.

The condition of the Church all this while (all this time of Satans reigne in forms of knowledg and worship) hath been very lamentable, and is expressed in Scripture by parables and resemblances of a sad state. She hath been as a City pulled down, like a ruined City, which needs rebuilding, before she can come to be a City again, (*when the Lord shall build up Sion.*) She hath been like a wilderness, barren, undressed, unregarded. She hath been like a mournfull widow, whose husband hath been rent from her, and her children slain. She hath lost all her ornaments, all her garments, all her ordinances, all her appearances and wayes of life, in so much as *the wayes of Sion mourn*. But *Babylon*, the mother of harlots, she has got all the beauty, all the glory, all the Churches attire, all the Churches ordinances, and all the trade and traffique runs thither, and she is cryed up for the true Church; and if any dare speak a word against her, & for the true Church indeed, they are exclaime against for schismaticks, and hereticks, and war prepared against them, and some or other of the beasts horns presently pushing at them. Thus it has gone all the time of the Apostacy, the whore has flourished with the name of the Church, making great merchandize of souls, selling their formall stuff for money; and abundance of children hath the whore brought forth, and nourished with her milke of deceit: but the true woman, the Lambs wife with her seed, and the living food from her living breasts, have had no place on the earth.

But this state of things is ended in part, and ending apace. The Lord God of life is arisen out of his holy habitation to assault the Dragon,

Dragon, to discover and strip the whore, to recover a possession for his life in the earth, to make roome in the world for his Church, which he is bringing out of the wilderness. The battel is begun, the territories of Antichrist are assaulted, the Lamb hath appeared on his white horse, and hath gathered many of his called, faithfull and chosen about him, the Ensign is lifted up: the light (which searcheth the inwards of the enemies dominions) hath appeared, and his inmost power and wisdom is not feared, but the Lord God is feared, and the Dragons arm withers, and the head of his pollicy (whereby he ensnared & intangled from the life) is crushing, glory to the endlesse power of life for ever and for ever.

Be wise now therefore, & loose not your share in the immortal Crown, Take heed how ye be found fighters against the Lamb, in the wisdom & power of *Babylon* which is to fall, Painting will not passe now: That blood of the Lamb is felt, which washes off the whores paint, even all her painted notions of the blood of Christ, & of sanctification and redemption, &c. the whorish nature being discovered underneath all these. Ye have got the name of Church, the name of Christians, the name of ordinances, &c. by the whores help, but the nature of life ye want: and the living power is come to recover the name from you, and we, his living witnesses, testifie to your faces, that ye shall not enjoy it, but the name and the thing shall go together; and he that hath not the thing, shall also loose the name. Yea, your eyes shall see that ye have been the sacrilegious ones, who have stoln holy names and titles, which ye never received from the hand of God; but the whorish spirit (which is out of the life, and an enemy to the life) hath handed them to you. And this is told you in dear and tender love, that ye might not perish, but have eternall life abiding in your hearts, and the new name written by the Spirit of life on your foreheads, which all that know the writing of the life, may be able to read and acknowledge.

There are severall touches of these things, in diverse of of the Epistles of the Apostles: but the full relation is given forth in that book of the *Revelation*, which was penned by the Spirit of God, to be read in the light of the Spirit, and so to be a preservative against the overspreading contagion of Antichristianism. And it is said, at the entrance into it, *Blessed is he that readeth, & they that*

bear the words of this prophesse, & he p. those things which are written therein. But men having lost the Spirit, have not been able to read it, and having lost the right ear, they have not been able to heare the words it speaks: and how then could they keepe the things written therein? He that doth not understand what he is warned against, how is it likely he should be preserved by the warning? The Spirit of God judged this warning necessary, but the spirit of deceit cries it is a deep thing, not to be medled with. Now this is a plain demonstration, that men generally are overtaken with the whoredom, and drink of the whores cup, & submit themselves to the beast, and exalt his horns, and receive his mark, and some or other of his names; because they have not the knowledge of that which discovers these things, and was given by the Spirit of God to fore warn, and to preserve out of them. He that knoweth not the mistery of iniquity working under a form of godlines, may not he easily be deceived with the mistery of iniquity? He that knoweth not what is become of the true Church & ministry, and where to look for them, may not he easily own a false Church and ministry? He that knoweth not the Spirit of the Scriptures, which the Church carried with her, when she left the letter behind her, may not he easily set up the letter for his rule? He that knoweth not the living mark and name of a Christian, with which the Spirit of life seals all the Lambs of Christ in the life, may not he easily give this name to himselfe, and to others who have not this mark, but the beasts mark? He that knoweth not the true faith, the true love, the true hope, the true joy, the true peace, the true rest, the true consolation in Christ the life (the true meeknes and patience of the Saints, &c.) may not he easily set up shadows, or likenneses of these (which he gathers from the letter of the Scriptures, and the promises thereof, receiving the knowledge of them into the wrong part, & applying them to the wrong thing) instead of these? Ah poor hearts! The book of the Revelation is easie to that Spirit that wrote it: and it was not given forth to be said by as uselesse; but to be serviceable in the hand of the Spirit, for the ages after the dayes of the Apostles; and in the true light it is easily read: and they that can read it, can see that in it, which they that cannot read it, cannot beleieve. And this is plainly seen, That there is but the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of deceit: but the Lambs wife, and the whore (which hath whored from the Spirit,

Spirit, which hath made use of the letter, to run a whoring from that Spirit that wrote it :) that there is but the true Church, and the false Church : but life, and death : but form, and power : but Christ the mystery of godlinesse, and Antichrist the mystery of iniquity : but God, and the dragon : God in the Church or Temple in the Wildernesse, and the dragon in the worlds churches and temples, appearing there as if he were God, giving forth lawes and ordinances like God ; and all the world falls down before him, and worships him as if he were God : and hopes by this worship which they perform to him, and by their faith and hope which they receive from him, to be saved at last. I say there are but these two : and he that is joyned to the one of these, is not joyned to the other. Let him that readeth, understand : which he may easily doe by the wisdom of the Spirit, but never can by the wisdom of the letter. For though we know how to join these two in the life, yet there is a necessity of leperating them at present, till the letter be gained out of the hands of the whorish spirit, which hath built up severall forms of knowledge, religion, and worship in mystery-*Babilon*, by the letter without the life, all which must fall with *Babilon*.

A. N

Exhortation, relating to the workings of
the mystery of Iniquity ; and the mystery
of godlinesse in this present age.

ALL people upon earth, who love your souls, and have any true secret pantings after God, look to the nature of your Spirits, and look to the nature of those things ye let into your minds ; least ye take in death for life, error for truth, and so sow to your selves corruption, and rear up a fabricke in mystery-*Babilon*, which will be turned into desolation and utter ruins, by the power of life from *Sion*.

Strong is the Spirit of deceit that is entred into the world, and glorious and very taking are his images and likenesses of truth, which will deceive all but the very elect, who were chosen from

the foundation of the world, and whose eyes are opened to see the foundation of life, which was before the foundation of the world.

It hath been an heavy dull time for many ages: There have only been witnesses hitherto raised against Antichrist, and he hath found it an easie matter to knock them down, and keepe up his wayes of prophanesse, and of formall superstitious kinds of devotion, up and down all the nations. But now it is a quick time, the Spirit of the Lord God hath arisen, the searching eye is opened, the pursuit after the very Spirit of Antichrist is begun, yea very quick and fresh is the scent of that Spirit which hunteth the whore; and now she goes forward and backward, traverses her ground, changes her paint and colours often, shifts her garments continually, and uses all the art she can to save her life. Now the king of *Babylon* opens his treasury, brings forth all his likenesses, all his images, all his appearances; with some or other of them (if it be possible) to tempt the simple soul, and keep it satisfied therewith, in some of his chambers of darknesse and imagery, out of the life and power.

Therefore now be warned and look about you, and be not cōfused with any of the wares of *Babylon*, where the marchandize and traffique is for souls, and where all the wares of deceit are, which are proper to cōfuse souls: but seeke for the nature of that thing, which the inward, pantings of your heart at any time have been after; and wait for the opening of that eye, which can see, through all manner of paint, to that nature: and keep low in the life, simple and honest-hearted, and then gawdy appearances will not take with you; for they are only temptations to the aspiring part, which is lifted up above the pure, low, humble principle: and if that part were brought down, ye would be safe: but while that stands, ye will not be out of the danger of temptations. Now this know:

There is nothing whereof *Sion* is built, but the likenesse of it is in *Babylon*: and the likenesse is very taking, even more taking to that eye which is open in men, then the truth it selfe. The truth is a plain simple thing, it is not gawdy in appearance, its excellency lies in its nature: but the appearances of truth which Satan paints, are very gawdy, very glorious, seemingly very spirituall, very pure, very precious, very sweet; they, many times, even ra-

vish

with that understanding and those affections, that are out of the life. Oh what shall I say? Shall I speake a litle of the wares of *Babylon*? where is there an ear which can hear me? yet he that opens my mouth, can open thine ear. Therefore let me speake a litle plainly.

1. There are many glorious false births in *Babylon*. There is no inheriting the Kingdome, but by being born againe. This doctrine the king of *Babylon* preacheth: he is faine to do so, else the letter of the Scripture would overthrow his kingdome. Now therefore to keep from the true new birth, he hath his images of the new birth, his severall false births. A great while outward baptisme, and a formall knowledge was enough to make a man a christian: but now since that is discovered, and will not do, he brings forth better births: he hath inward changes of the minde (multitudes of them) fit for every one who is seeking after the life, to be tempted from the life with: and he tempts every one with a proper bait, with that which is taking to him in his present estate. What changes any kind of knowledge by vertue of the notion (with the devills quickning power added to it) can produce in any man, the Devill can transform man into. Yea many are these changes: and he that doth not know the nature of the true birth, may easily be deceived with that which is just like the thing he looks for. A man looks for a new birth, for an inward change: he looks for a knowledge to change him: he shall have just the very likenesse of that which his heart desires, the lively likenesse, the devill is ready at hand to furnish him with it: which way can the man, who never saw the true thing, espy the cheat?

2. There are many glorious desires in *Babylon*, many pantings, many breathings after that which this birth of *Babylon* takes to be life. The devil hath these wares, these images in his shop too. As he hath a false birth in imitation of the true, so he hath false breathings for his false birth. If his child could not seemingly breath towards God (as if he were a naturall child of God) he would soon be detected: therefore he inflames him with desires of growth, with desires of enjoyment of that which he calls life, with seeming desires of serving and glorifying God: and here come in the prayers of the fleshy birth, which are many times carryed on with exceeding great earnestnesse of the fleshy

part, to which also the father of this birth giveth answers. And now which way can deceit be so much as suspected here? And yet here also the deceiver lodgeth, and herein he worketh, raising strong desires in that part wherein he dwells, that he may allay those pure desires, which otherwise would be arising from the life underneath, and which (notwithstanding all this) sometimes doe arise, especially when the soul is in anguish.

3. There's false food in *Babylon*, false knowledge to feed this wrong nature with. There's knowledge falsely so called. There's severall appearances of all the truths in *Sion*. There's outward knowledge of the letter, and there's inward mysticall knowledge, and each of these have their warmth, and their freshness, and do nourish up this child, and cause it to grow. Yea what knowledges and experiences (which at first sprang from the true life) this spirit makes a prey of, and daily brings into his *Babylon*, therewith to feed and fatten that which is born of him, and to cover the old deceitfull nature under, which is not slain thereby, but daily lives and moves and pursueth it selfe: this is certainly felt by that which is made sensible in the life, but hard to be spoken, because the deceived heart is so grosse, and the ear so heavy. Now here the painted whore, which hath dealt treacherously with the life, sits as a Queen, and sayes she shall see no sorrow: This knowledge is certain to her, these experiences she hath had the feeling of, and knows they can never be shaken. But O thou Princeesse of *Babylon*, the Lord will strip thee, the Lord will unbare thy inwards, & thine own eyes shall see thy nakednesse, which shall be for a perpetuall reproach among all the inhabitants of *Sion*: and then thy dark deceitfull spirit, shall have no more to say against those, who now see through thy covering, to thy nature, in the light; and judge thee (not of themselves, nor in their own wills and understandings) but from the true power, and in the true guidance of the life, whose work it is to pursue, overtake and judgdea h even to death. For all this knowledge, and all these experiences in thee (though thou feelest it not, nor canst see it with that eye wherewith thou lookest to see) are held captive by that which transgressed and hath erred from the life, and are made use of to keep thy soul in bands: and as they are thus held, death and the curse must overtake them, or that life in thee, from which they first sprang, can possibly arise. Grasp not after the knowledge of this

in the understanding part, but wait for the sense of it from that life, which lyes slain underneath these, and by that part which exalts these.

4. There are false keys, to open the severall chambers of imagery in *Babylon*. This good man cannot gather of himselfe, it must be given to him: this knowledge man cannot get into by himselfe, but as this spirit leads him; and opens to him: for he hath the keys of death, and opens into the treasures of death. Now this hugely confirms a man in the deceit, without the least suspicion of it. Why, saith he, I had not this knowledge from my selfe, I came not to it by mine own skill or understanding; but it was given me, it was opened to me: and it came in fresh, and warmed my heart, begetting sweet and pure desires in me, and hath made in eye the glory of God, and not my selfe. Yet, it might come thus in the likeness, and work the likeness of this in thee; and yet it self not be truth, nor be able to work the truth of this in thee: and this is proper to deceive thy very heart, and make thee a pleasant inhabitant of *Babylon*, and a joyfull worshiper of the King thereof, whom through this deep deceit, and most subtle false appearances in thy heart, thou mistakest for the King of *Sion*.

5. This false spirit hath his false crosses, his false combats and fightings. The very Papists have not only their wooden and stone crosses, but they have also their wayes of self-deniall, their wayes of crossing the naturall part, of resignation to the divine will (as they call it) of fighting against corruption, &c. It is manifest, that a man must deny himselfe, or else he cannot be a Christian (his own will must not, cannot live, if he truly give himselfe up to Christ:) therefore that spirit, which lyeth lurking to deceive, hath severall wayes of self denyall to teach (all which must have some hardnesse in them to the naturall part, or else they would not passe:) and these may produce great and constant conficting in the flesh, and yet the fleshly nature be still kept alive woder all these conficts and exercises of selfe deniall. He hath a circumcising knife, which cuts off a great deale, but alwayes spares the nature: and as long as the nature is spared, the Devil still hath that wherein he can dwell.

6. He hath his false love to God and man, and his false zeale for God. Love and zeale are two distinguishing things. All men conclude:

conclude, that love determines a man to be a Christian, and so they take up some appearance or other of love, somewhat that satisfies themselves that their love is right, both to God and man. The very Papists, who are full of blood and cruelty, yet pretend to love: they have an image of love which contents them. But there are far higher images, even images of universall love and sweetnesse, which no eye can perceive, but that which knows the truth. And take one word from me, ye to whom it belongs: all ye that cry up universall love, from the sweet sense of its image, ye shall one day know, that one act of particular love from the true nature, exceeds this in its utmost extent.

7. He hath his false life. The devil hath not only a dead formall religion, but he hath a resemblance, an imitation of the quicknings of the Spirit. The devill puts his life into his image, where need requires. He hath not only a dead litterall knowledge, but he hath paintings of the life: he draws a thing to the life: he makes his dead image of truth, as like the living substance of truth, as possibly he can; inasmuch as his images of life, at a distance, without being beheld in the true life, cannot but be taken for living. Now here is the depth of deceit, when the devils images of life in the heart, are taken for the living thing, for the life it selfe.

8. He hath his false liberty. There is a glorious liberty in the Gospell: there is perfect freedom in the service of the life: there is liberty in the power of the life over all the creatures. God made all things for man, and he denies him nothing, he being in subjection to him in the life, and using all in the dominion of the life. Now the devil paints a liberty like this, yea a liberty that seems greater then this, even a liberty wherein the fleshly part (whose very nature is eternally shut out of the nature of true liberty) hath scope; which liberty is not surrounded, nor cannot be surrounded by the power of life, as this is: and in this painted liberty, that spirit which painted it lives, which paint the true liberty takes off, slaying that which calls it liberty, and gathering in the name of liberty from this false appearance, to that which is liberty indeed. And by the way, he that can read this, let him: The perdition of the true liberty lies in the perfection of bonds, in the perfect birding down of that which is

out of the life: for the true liberty, is the liberty of the life, and of nothing else: and when all that is contrary to the life, is perfectly bound down, then the life hath its full scope, without the least controul of the fleshly part: and when the life lives, then that which is joynd to the life lives also.

Now here's the misery of iniquity, here's the inward Kingdom of darknesse, here's the glory of *Babylon*! Here's he that contends for the Kingdome, for the inheritance! Here the son of the bond-woman (thus dressed, thus furnished, thus filled within and without) will have it go for granted that he is the right heir: and yet all this while wants the nature of that which is to inherit, and cannot possibly receive that nature into himselfe, but only such images afore mentioned. And if in tender love to his soule, from a clear sight of this thing, we warn him, and bid him look about, he cries doe not judge. He really thinks he is right in the main, and he seemes willing to refer it to the day of tryal. Ah poor hearts! the eye is opened which can see. That which hath judged the deceit in us, can also judge the deceit in thee. Cannot the spirituall eye see things in its kind? to what end hath God given it? Canst thou see and judge naturall things in the naturall part? So can they see and judge spirituall things who are in the light, and wholive in the life: yea we shall continue judging thee in the flesh, and in the humility, till God open that in thee which can save to our judgement.

Object. How difficult doe you make the way to life, if not utterly impossible? If all this be true, who can be saved?

Ans. The way to life is very difficult, yea and impossible to that part in man, which is so busie in willing and running towards life: but it is as easie on the other hand, to that which the father begetteth, raiseth up, &c. leadeth. *The wayfaring man though a fool shall not erre.* The wisest and richest Merchant in *Babylon*, cannot set one step in it: the least child in *Sion* cannot erre there. Therefore know that in thy selfe, to which it is so hard, and know that which God hath given to thee, which will make it easie.

Thou hast a living talent given thee by God, let not thine eye be drawn from that; but joyn to that: keep there, and thou art safe: and that will open thine eye to see all deceits, just in the very season and hour of temptation. For thou must expect to meet

with all these temptations, as thy growth makes thee capable of receiving them. And as they come, the true eye being kept open, they will be seen: and being seen, they will easily be avoided in the power of life: for in vain the net is spread in sight of the bird. Therefore that thou mayst be safe.

1. Know the light, the eternall light of life, the little glimmerings and shinings of it in thy soul. This comes from the rock, to lead thee to the rock: and if thou follow it, it will fix thee upon the rock where thou canst not be shaken.

2. Keep in the light, keep within the hedge, step not out of thine own, keep out of the circumference of the spirit of deceit, the power of whose witchery and sorcery extends all over the regions of darknesse.

3. Love simplicity, love the nakednesse of life, stand single in the honesty of the heart, out of the intricate subtle reasonings, and wise consultations about things: for by these means the serpent comes to twine about and deceive thy soul: but in the simplicity of the movings of life, in the light, lies the power, the strength, the safety.

4. Lye very low continually, even at the foot of the lowest breathing and appearances of the light. Take heed of being above that wherein thy life lyes: for the wisdom, the power, the strength, yea the great glory lyes in the humility: and thou must never be exalted, thou must never come out of the humility, but find and enjoy the honour and glory of the life in the humility.

5. Mind the reproofs of the light, for that will still be setting thee to rights. That will still be bringing down that which would get up above, and there lyes the preservation. Oh the chastenings of the light, the sweet chastenings of the love by the light! These are healing stripes. This brings down the exalter, and that in thee which loves to be exalted, and to be seeking the honour of the spirituall riches, before the humility is perfected.

Thus in love to souls, have I powred out my soul before the Lord, and held forth gentle leadings, even to the most stubborn and stiffe-necked,

THE END.

